

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EARG, EFIN, DR

SUBJECT: SECOND PRESIDENTIAL TALK ON AGRICULTURE

REF: SD 3186

1. ON FRIDAY EVENING (AUGUST 2) PRESIDENT BALAGUER ADDRESSED THE NATION ON RADIO AND T.V. FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE NIGHT REGARDING DOMINICAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY. THIS SECOND SPEECH COVERED RICE PRODUCTION AND AGRARIAN REFORM.

2. ANNOUNCING AN ALL-OUT PROGRAM TO INCREASE RICE PRODUCTION, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS IN THE COUNTRY'S QUOTE HIGHEST INTEREST UNQUOTE, THE PRESIDENT ALSO INDICATED THAT WHATEVER RESOURCES WERE NECESSARY WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE. HE DECREED THAT RICE IMPORTS WILL BE PROHIBITED AFTER JANUARY 1, 1975. IF NECESSARY, OTHER CEREALS WILL BE USED INSTEAD OF RICE. THE PRESIDENT SAID, HOWEVER, HE WOULD AUTHORIZE RICE IMPORTS AFTER JANUARY 1, IF LOCAL PRODUCTION WAS AFFECTED BY DROUGHT OR OTHER NATURAL DISASTER.

3. BALAGUER HAS FORMED A COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE RICE POLICY. THE COMMISSION IS COMPOSED OF THE SECSTATE FOR AGRICULTURE, DIRECTOR GEN. OF THE INSTITUTO AGRARIO DOMINICANO (I.A.D.) AND SUB-DIRECTOR GEN. OF THE INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE RECURSOS
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4. THE PRESIDENT ALSO RESPONDED TO CRITICISM THAT THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAWS OF 1972 AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT IMPLEMENTATION CAUSED THE DECLINE IN RICE PRODUCTION. HE DENIED THAT AGRARIAN REFORM WAS THE CAUSE ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION AND EVALUATION OF DOMINICAN AGRICULTURAL POLICIES. TERMING THE CURRENT LANDHOLDING SYSTEM QUOTE BRUTAL UNQUOTE AND QUOTE UNJUST UNQUOTE, HE STATED THAT THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF AGRARIAN REFORM WAS NOT INCREASED PRODUCTION BUT SOCIAL JUSTICE.

5. COMMENT: IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM, WHICH WAS APPLIED MOST VIGOROUSLY TO RICE LANDS, DID, IN FACT, RESULT IN DECREASED PRODUCTION. THE PRESIDENT, WHILE DEFENDING HIS REFORM INITIATIVES AND ADMITTING SOME ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS, APPEARS NEVERTHELESS TO HAVE CONFRONTED THE SITUATION AND COMMITTED HIMSELF TO RESTORING THE COUNTRY'S SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN RICE PRODUCTION. POLITICALLY IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO BACK OFF FROM WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE IN THE RICE LANDS. HIS IMPLIED CRITICISM OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF STATE-OWNED RICE PROJECTS MAY PORTEND THE REPLACEMENT OF THE CURRENT DIRECTOR OF THE I.A.D.

6. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS HAS BEEN FAVORABLE.
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